



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 10/03/2001

GAIN Report #HR1008

Croatia

Biotechnology

Draft GMO Law and Government Anti-GMO

Campaign

2001

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Report Highlights: The Croatian government has drafted a restrictive but temporary law governing the importation, use, and release of genetically modified (GM) plants and food products. The law is expected to pass parliament this Fall. The draft law prohibits all GM imports, their use in food, feed, or field tests, and allows only for confined testing of new GM varieties. The government is also trying to reposition Croatia as an ecological haven and is tapping into the GM concerns of western European tourists with an English language billboard campaign that includes a clear anti-GM message.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Vienna [AU1], HR

I. Draft Law Restricts Use, Imports of GMOs

Introduction

The Croatian government has drafted a restrictive but temporary law governing the importation, use, and release of genetically modified (GM) plants and food products. The law is expected to pass parliament this Fall. The draft law prohibits all GM imports, their use in food, feed, or field tests, and allows only for confined testing of new GM varieties. The text of the draft is very general and will be implemented by regulations issued by the Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Technology, and Health. These specific regulations have not yet been written and will play a key role in how restrictive the law becomes in practice. The responsible ministries will have 90 days from the date of passage of the law to formulate implementing regulations. Officials have indicated they will apply the EU's proposed rules (e.g., contamination thresholds) to the extent possible. This law will be replaced next year by a permanent law similar to the EU's novel foods law and by a more general law on environment which will be based on the Biosafety Protocol and EU legislation.

Bioethics Committee

The draft law was prepared by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Forestry, Technology, and Environmental Protection in consultation with Croatia's 'Bioethics' Committee. Croatia's Bioethics Committee, which was established in 1999, does not provide specific approvals for proposed GM research or release but reviews proposed legislation and advises the government. The Committee is made up of 26 scientist, ethicists, NGO's, and representatives from the various ministries. A list of the Committee members is given in Attachment A.

Highlights of the Draft Law

The intent of the draft is to prohibit the importation, use, and commercial propagation of genetically modified plants. The draft law establishes:

- Authority to control the implementation of this Law is to be shared by the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Forestry, Technology, and Environmental Protection. These ministries will be authorized to conduct inspections and to demand evidence that imported products are not genetically modified.
- The Ministry of Science and Technology is to issue approvals for the import, use or production of GMOs only after having received consent by the other three ministries.
- The Ministry of Health will accredit the laboratories to test for the presence of GMOs. (There are apparently no laboratories in Croatia capable of determining the presence of GM material in food or in bulk commodities although the government is seeking to build the expertise.)
- The draft law grants authority to seize and destroy GMOs, with the costs to be born by the end user of the product.

- The law establishes financial penalties for violators.
- Any research that begins before this law becomes effective must be reported to the Ministry of Science and Technology within 45 days.
- The government will identify legal entities (person) that will be allowed to conduct laboratory research. The use of GMOs is limited to scientific research in contained experiments. Procedures for handling and destroying GMO and products are also to be established.
- The draft law does not cover the use of biotechnology in medicine.
- The draft law does not address transshipping GMOs from Croatian ports to inland destinations.

[Note: the text of the draft is being translated into English and will soon be available upon request. Please contact: agvienna@compuserve.com]

Enzymes and Yeasts to Have Positive List

Prior to the law going into effect, the Ministry of Science and Technology will draw up a list of allowable additives and enzymes that are based on GM-processes. Like the EU, Croatia will not require labeling, for example, for cheese made with GM -rennet.

II. Government Sponsored Campaign Contains Anti-GM Message

At the same time as new laws governing biotechnology are being drafted, the government is trying to reposition Croatia as an ecological haven. An English language billboard campaign is tapping into the GM concerns of western European tourists. The apparent goals of the campaign, which is sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, are to portray Croatian producers as 'natural' and 'organic' and to strengthen agro-tourism and increase exports of organic products.



Attachment A

**Croatian 'Bioethic' Committee Members
September 2001**

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